

**Remarks at a Reception for
Congressional Candidate Mike
Sodrel in Indianapolis, Indiana**
March 24, 2006

Thank you all for coming. Please be seated. Michael, thanks for having me here. Let me start off by telling you it's great to be back in Indiana, the great city of Indianapolis. I'm here because I strongly believe it's in Indiana's interest to send Mike Sodrel back to the United States Congress.

And I want to thank you all for supporting him. Some of you are from his district; some of you aren't, but all of you are wise enough to know a good candidate when you see one.

I'm traveling without the better half of my family. Laura sends her best to the Sodrels; she sends her best to the Governor; she sends her best to the good people of Indiana. I'm a lucky man to be married to Laura Bush, and Mike Sodrel is a lucky man to be married to Keta Sodrel. I'm glad to be here with the Sodrels and the Sodrel family. I like a man in Congress who has his priorities straight, and Michael Sodrel prioritizes his family as a central part of his life.

Governor, I'm proud you're here. I knew Mitch was going to be a fine Governor because, first of all, he's a fine man. He's got a wonderful sense of humor. I like a fellow who doesn't take a—run a poll to tell him what to think. I like somebody who stands up and does what he thinks is right. Give the first lady my best, and the four daughters.

I want to thank Congressman Steve Buyer for being here. Buyer, it's good to see you. Thanks for your service in the United States Congress. And Congressman Michael Pence, thanks for coming, Mike. I appreciate you being here. It's a good sign when other Members of Congress come out to support one of their brothers. So thanks for supporting Mike.

You know what I know about him. He's an effective person. He can get things done. He's a reasonable guy. That's what you want in the United States Congress. In a land of lawyers, it's good to have somebody who is an entrepreneur and started their own business.

I thank the attorney general, Steve Carter, for being here. General, I'm proud you're

here; the secretary of state, Todd Rokita—thank you both for coming, and thanks for serving your State. I thank everybody else for coming, particularly those who have worked hard to raise the money. For those of you who are interested in following up on your contributions, get over to Mike's district and help turn out the vote.

And that's why I want to recognize Murray Clark, who's the chairman of the Indiana Republican Party, and his wife, Janet. Get those grassroots moving at the proper time. And we'll send this guy back to the United States Congress.

And finally, I understand the former mayor of Indianapolis, my longtime friend, Steve Goldsmith, is with us today. Stephen, if you're here, thanks for being here; thanks for your service; and thanks for your friendship. He was on the leading edge of the compassionate conservative agenda, which has made an enormous difference in the lives of people, not only here in Indianapolis but around the country.

Let me give you a Mike Sodrel quote. He said, "The first role of the Federal Government is to provide for the defense of the country." It's important to have people in the United States Congress who understand this is a nation at war. I wish I could tell you otherwise. I wish I could say that an enemy which attacked us on September the 11th, 2001, has quit. That is not the reality of the world in which we live. The reality in the world in which we live is, there's an enemy which hates those of us who embrace freedom and would like to strike us again. And therefore, it's important to have Members of the United States Congress who understand the stakes in the global war on terror. And Mike Sodrel understands the stakes.

My most important job is to lead our Nation and to protect you. And so I have—want to share with you some of the lessons I learned after September the 11th, 2001, lessons that Members of the United States Congress must have in order for us to do our job. Lesson one is that we must defeat the enemy overseas so we do not have to face them here at home.

Ours is an enemy which has embraced an ideology—an ideology of hatred, an ideology that is totalitarian in nature. They decide if

you can worship and how you worship; they decide whether or not your children can go to school; they decide this; they decide that. They stand exactly the opposite of the United States of America. They have expressed their tactics for the world to see. They believe that those of us living in democracies are weak, flaccid. It's just a matter of time, they believe, if they continue to exert pressure, that we will retreat from the world. That's what they want.

It's important to have Members of the United States Congress who understand the stakes and understand the nature of the enemy. They cannot exist without safe haven. And so one of the doctrines and one of the lessons learned after September the 11th is that we must hold people to account for harboring terrorists. If you harbor a terrorist, if you feed a terrorist, if you house a terrorist, you're equally guilty as the terrorists.

Michael Sodrel understands that. He also understands that when the President speaks, he better mean what he says. And I meant what I said when I said that, and that's why I told the Taliban—I said, "Get rid of Al Qaida." They refused. We sent a liberation force into Afghanistan to uphold doctrine, to protect ourselves and, in so doing, liberated 25 million people from the clutches of a barbaric regime.

A lesson of September the 11th is that not only are we facing a brutal enemy that's willing to take innocent life, an enemy which thinks we're soft, an enemy which tries to find safe haven—but a vital lesson of September the 11th that our Nation must not forget is that when we see a threat, we must take it seriously, before it comes to hurt us. You see, before September the 11th, it was assumed by policymakers and people in office that we were safe, that oceans protected us, that we're in good shape when it came to threats. We could see a threat overseas, and we could deal with it if we wanted to, or not.

That changed on September the 11th. From now on, the United States of America, in order to protect our citizens, must deal with threats, must take them seriously to do our most fundamental job, which is to protect the American people. I saw threats in Saddam Hussein. Members of the United States

Congress—both Republicans and Democrats—saw a threat in Saddam Hussein. Members of the United Nations Security Council saw threats in Saddam Hussein. The world spoke. They said, "Disarm, disclose, or face serious consequences." The choice was Saddam Hussein's, and removing Saddam Hussein has made this Nation and the world a safer place.

I need Members of Congress who support a plan for victory in Iraq. We've committed brave men and women, volunteers, people who said, "I volunteer to serve the United States of America." And they're in harm's way, and we must have Members of the United States Congress who will not weaken and who will make sure our troops have all the necessary support to achieve the mission. And Mike Sodrel understands that and is a strong supporter of the United States military.

Our strategy is to help rebuild the country. Our strategy is to encourage democracy. I know it's troubled times. I understand the enemy is capable of affecting how we think about the war in Iraq, because they're willing to take innocent life. And this turbulence on your TV screens affects the conscious of Americans—I know that, and so does the enemy. But amidst all the turmoil, I want you to remember that progress towards democracy is being made. It wasn't all that long ago—4 months ago—that 11 million Iraqis defied the killers, defied the terrorists, and said loud and clear, "We want democracy." Democracy is on the march in Iraq, and our job as a Government is to help them form a unity government, a government around which the country can rally.

The other part of our strategy is to train the Iraqis so they can take the fight to the enemy. The enemy cannot defeat us on the battlefield. They just can't beat us. So what they tried to do is, they're trying to create a civil war; that's why they blew up the mosque. But amidst the turmoil and the pictures and the devastation and the reprisal, I want you to know that the Iraqi forces performed. The Iraqi forces we trained were able to bring some sense of stability throughout the country of Iraq. The mission is to train the Iraqis so they can take the fight.

The mission is to encourage democracy. As Iraqi troops stand up, we'll stand down.

But I'm going to tell you something about me. I'm not going to make up my mind about Iraq based upon polls and focus groups. I will make up my mind about troops based upon the recommendations of the United States military, not politicians in Washington, DC. [Applause] Thank you all.

The only way that we can lose is if we lose our will. It's the only way we can lose. The stakes in Iraq are high. Remember, this is a global war on terror. Iraq is a part of the war on terror. And they're high because the enemy has stated they would like to have a safe haven from which to launch attacks against America again.

I fully understand some in the United States don't believe what the enemy has said. I think you better have a President and Members of Congress who take the enemy seriously. You better have people in Washington, DC, who see the world the way it is, not the way we would like it to be. If our most important job is to protect the American people, we must be diligent and steadfast and never ending in our desire to protect you. Mike understands that, and so do I. Ultimately, the way to defeat the enemy, the way to defeat an ideology of darkness, a totalitarian ideology of darkness, is to defeat it with a philosophy of light. And that philosophy is liberty.

As I make my decisions as to how to protect you, I want you to know I'm guided by this principle: I believe there's an Almighty, and I believe the Almighty's great gift to every man and woman—every man and woman—on the face of the Earth is freedom. Freedom is universal. It is non-negotiable. And as freedom takes hold, the world becomes more peaceful. Democracies don't war.

As you explain what we're trying to do in Iraq—and will do in Iraq—to your friends and neighbors, remind them about the history of Europe. America lost hundreds of thousands of soldiers on the continent of Europe in two world wars. And yet today, Europe is whole, free, and at peace. And the reason why is: Democracies don't war.

My dad, as an 18-year-old kid, when the country called, said, "I'm going in to fight

the Japanese." I'm sure there's—you've got some relatives of others who went to war with the Japanese in World War II. They were the sworn enemy. They attacked us. They attacked the United States of America. Less people, by the way, died in the Pearl Harbor attack than died on September the 11th, 2001, on our soil.

And yet today, interestingly enough, I sit at a table with the Prime Minister of Japan working on how to keep the peace. Isn't that interesting? Sixty years ago or so, 18-year-old George H.W. Bush volunteered to fight the Japanese as his sworn enemy. And now his son sits at the table to keep the peace with the Japanese.

What happened? What happened was the Japanese adopted a Japanese-style democracy. If we don't lose our nerve, if we stay the course, someday down the road, an American President will be working with democratically-elected leaders in the broader Middle East at the table, to keep the peace.

I like working with Mike Sodrel because he understands the role of Government is not to create wealth but an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit can flourish, in which people can realize their dreams, in which people can start with nothing in America and, through hard work and imagination, build assets they call their own.

Mike understands that. By the way, that environment was challenged during my Presidency. We've had a recession; we had a stock market collapse; we had an attack on our country; we have been a nation at war; we've had major natural disasters. But because our party, because Members of the Congress here, people like Mike Sodrel, understand that if people have more of their own money to save and spend and invest, we can recover from difficult economic times.

Oh, I remember the tax debates there in Washington, DC. I remember those Democratic critics who spoke loud and clear. I remember one of them saying, "It's reckless, irresponsible plan that will undermine opportunity in our country." You remember those debates, the loud noises they made about cutting taxes.

Well, let me read to you the statistics. Our economy grew last year at 3.5 percent. The unemployment rate across America is 4.8

percent. In the last 2½ years, we've added nearly 5 million new jobs. The unemployment rate in Indiana is 4.7 percent. Productivity is up. Small businesses are flourishing. More people own a home than ever before in our Nation's history. Cutting taxes for the American people was the right thing to do.

We've got a record to stand on. We've got a record of dealing with some serious economic times. There's a debate, of course, in Washington, DC, about tax cutting, and I want the people of the 9th Congressional District and districts all across America to understand the difference in our record. Our party and Members of the United States Congress stood squarely for tax relief for everybody who pays taxes.

And the Democratic Party has a clear record. In 2001, more than 90 percent of the congressional Democrats voted against cutting income tax rates. More than 90 percent of the Democrats voted against the bill that provided tax relief for married couples. More than 90 percent of the Democrats voted for [against]* a bill that would have put the death tax on the road to extinction. More than 90 percent of the Democrats voted against a bill that doubled the child credit. More than 95 percent of the congressional Democrats voted against cutting taxes on capitol gains.

And recently, during the budget debate, Democrats used the occasion to call for \$173 billion in tax hikes and fee increases. The difference is clear: If you want the Government in your pocket, vote Democrat; if you want to keep more of your hard-earned money, vote Republican.

And so the fundamental question confronting us in Washington is, how do we keep this economic recovery going? That's what people ought to be talking about. And we've got some good ideas as to how to keep it going. And the first thing is, make the tax cuts permanent. Oh, I know you've heard the same talk I've heard in Washington, "We've got a problem with the deficit." We do, and we're going to deal with it. But the Democrats have got a good idea, they think, and that's to run up your taxes to make sure the deficit—folks, that's not the way Washington works.

* White House correction.

Here's the way Washington works. They'll increase your taxes, and they'll figure out new ways to spend your money. The best way to make sure that we reduce the deficit is to keep progrowth economic policies in place and be wise about how we spend your money. That's why we need people like Mike Sodrel in the United States Congress.

It's important to set priorities when it comes to our budget. So long as we've got men and women in harm's way, we will make sure they have got that which is necessary to do their job. And I want to thank Mike and the Members of the United States Congress who are here who have prioritized supporting the United States military when it comes into our budget—comes to budget matters.

I don't know if you realize this, but over the past—the last budget cycle, thanks to the good work of Members of the United States Congress, we actually cut nonsecurity discretionary spending. We not only have slowed the growth of nonsecurity discretionary spending every year that I have been the President, last year we cut nonsecurity discretionary spending. And I submitted a budget to the United States Congress to do it again. And the Members in this crowd are supportive of a good, prioritizing, lean budget. And I want to thank you for your support.

The problem we have is that we've got people who want to spend more money in Washington. That's why we need fiscally sound people like Mike Sodrel in the United States Congress. And we also must show some political courage when it comes to the budget. The main reason the budget goes up is because of mandatory spending increases. Those would be your increases in Social Security and Medicare.

And we've got a problem, folks, when it comes to Social Security and Medicare. We've got a whole bunch of us getting ready to retire—that would be baby boomers like me. As a matter of fact—Mitch, you probably don't know this—but I turn 62, which qualifies me for Social Security, in 2008. That's a convenient year to become eligible for retirement. [Laughter]

And there's a lot of us, a lot of us baby boomers. I'm kind of scanning out there, and I see quite a few of us. [Laughter] And we've been promised greater benefits than the previous generation, and we're living longer. I

don't know about you all; I plan on just kind of stretching it out a little bit. [*Laughter*] And there are fewer people paying in the system, and the system is going broke.

I need people in the United States Congress like Michael, who's willing to work with me to reform and modernize these mandatory programs so that a future generation of kids can come up and say, "Thank God for that Congress. Thank God they're willing to do the hard work. Thank God they're willing to take on problems and not pass them on to future Presidents and future generations."

It's a tough issue, but that's why you sent us to Washington, DC, to deal with tough issues. If it were an easy issue, other people would have taken care of it. And I'm looking forward to working with both Republicans and Democrats to modernize both Social Security and Medicare so a young generation will say, "Job well done."

In order to make sure that we're—this economy keeps growing, listen, we can't fear the future. We've got to shape the future. We've got to be confident as a nation. We lead the world today, and I intend to work with Congress to put policies in place so that we can lead the world tomorrow.

And let me share some ideas with you. First of all, in order to lead—be the economic leader of the world, we've got to do something about these frivolous and junk lawsuits that are making it hard to risk capital. You know, it's fine, one thing to be—to have a legitimate lawsuit. It's these frivolous lawsuits and the junk lawsuits—and people are filing lawsuits right and left that are hurting the capacity of this country to realize our full potential. I look forward to working with Congress for meaningful and real tort reform.

I look forward to working with Congress to do something about our energy situation. I know it came as a surprise to you that a fellow from Texas would stand up and say, "We've got a problem; we're addicted to oil." [*Laughter*] But I meant it. It's an economic problem. It's an economic problem because as other economies begin to grow and use more fossil fuels, it affects our price.

It's a national security problem. We're dealing with some countries that don't particularly like us, and they've got a lot of oil.

It gives us a national security problem when people threaten to hold oil off the market for geopolitical reasons.

This country needs to come together, do some smart things—particularly when it comes to research and development—smart things about how we change our driving habits. I want people driving with corn extract, ethanol, grown right here in the State of Indiana, in order to keep these cars moving. One of these days, they're going to walk in with a crop report to the President and say, "The harvest down there in Indiana is great. We've got us a lot of corn, that means we're less dependent on foreign sources of oil."

We've got to make sure that we continue to invest in battery technologies. Right around the corner is a technology that will enable you to plug in your pickup truck and drive the first 40 miles on electricity. That's not going to help you in parts of rural Indiana, but if you're an urban person—in Indianapolis or Houston, Texas, or anywhere else in America—that first 40 miles means a lot when it comes to your driving. Imagine people being able to drive on electricity, not on gasoline, for the first 40 miles. It will make us less dependent on foreign sources of oil. When it comes to electricity, we've got to be wise about how we use our resources.

We'll continue to invest in clean coal technologies so this abundant resource can be used without fear of polluting our air. We need safe nuclear power if we intend to be an energy dependent and an environmentally conscious country. No, in order to help us remain competitive in the world, we've got to be wise about our energy policy, and I look forward to leading the Congress toward a new day when it comes to consuming, particularly Middle Eastern, oil.

In order to make sure that we're a competitive nation, we shouldn't fear the future; we ought to lead it. And the best way to lead it is to make sure our kids are educated for the jobs of the 21st century. I appreciate what these Governors, like Mitch Daniels, are doing—setting high standards and holding the people to account. I think it makes sense if you're spending a lot of money to say to the school districts, "Why don't you show us whether or not a child can read and

write?” It seems like a legitimate question to me.

It doesn't make any sense for the Federal Government to tell you how to teach. We believe in local control of schools. But when you're spending as much money as we do, it seems like we ought to be able to say, "Show us whether or not a child is reading." And if not, correct the problems early, before it's too late. You can't solve a problem unless you diagnose the problem.

And the No Child Left Behind Act believes every child can learn, believes in setting high standards, and says to the local districts, "All we want to know is, can the child learn to read and write and add and subtract? And if not, here's a little extra money to bring them up to speed."

Now, we've got to apply that same rigor and same standards to math and science and at the same time increase Government investment in research and development—and at the same time say to the private sector, "There's certainty when it comes to your budgets." The research and development tax credit should be a permanent part of the Tax Code. In order for the United States of America to be the leader of the world, we must have a job—a set of skills available for youngsters that will be able to fill the jobs of the 21st century, and we must be the leader in research and technology.

Mike Sodrel understands that. Mike Sodrel doesn't fear the future, because he intends to work with President George W. Bush to shape the future. By being the economic leader in the world, our people will realize a better standard of living. By being the economic leader of the world, we will continue to be able to bring prosperity to corners of our country.

You know, one thing Mike told me, he said, "Just remember one thing, when you're talking about my district, is that we've got a lot of farmers there." All right, I'm going to talk to the farmers in Mike's district. You better have somebody elected to the United States Congress who works to make sure there's markets for you to sell your products. If you're good at something, you want to be able to sell your products in new markets. And Indiana's farmers are very good at a lot of things. They're good at growing. They're

good at harvesting, and the United States Government ought to help them sell those products overseas at good prices.

Secondly, if you're a farmer, you better have a Member of the United States Congress who understands the effects of the death tax on the American family farmer. We've got a system today where you farm all your life; you're paying your taxes; and then you pass on—and your heirs get to pay taxes again. And sometimes those inheritance taxes mean you have to liquidate your farm. For the sake of stability in the farm community, we need to get rid of the death tax once and for all.

Most of all, I'm here for Mike Sodrel because he's a good, honest man. He's a decent man. He's a problem-solver. He's a practical fellow. He likes to get things done. He's a patriotic man. He's done a real fine job in the United States Congress, and I look forward to working with him in my last 2 years as President of the United States.

I want to thank you all for coming to support Michael Sodrel. Thanks for your interest. Thanks for your concern about our future. May God bless Indiana. May God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the Murat Centre. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., of Indiana, and his wife, Cheri; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

March 18

In the morning, at Camp David, MD, the President had an intelligence briefing.

March 19

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.